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## HISTORY OF MASSACHUSETTS ASBESTOS COMMISSION

In recognition of the fact that the use of asbestos in public buildings and schools is a potential health hazard, a special legislative commission was established under Chapter 58 of the Resolves of 1975, and was subsequently revived by Chapter 3, of The Resolves of 1980, to investigate and evaluate the extent of asbestos exposure in the public schools and public buildings of Massachusetts.

The special commission consists of two members of the Senate, three members of the House of Representatives and nine persons appointed by the Governor, including the Commissioner of Public Health, the Director of the Division of Occupational Hygiene and related experts in asbestos-related fields, two physicians, an architect, a construction engineer, a structural engineer, an environmental health scientist and a chemist.

The mandate for the Asbestos Commission was to "evaluate the extent of the use of asbestos as fireproofing in the public schools and public buildings of the Commonwealth and its containment and removal." The Commission was provided with an operating budget of \$50,000., which was used to hire technical staff for the Commission. The program was confined to an investigation of asbestos in public schools, and the scope of the project was limited to "spray-on" coatings under the assumption that it was this type of material and its use which had the greatest potential for generating airborne asbestos fibers.

Since 1977, the first year the Massachusetts Asbestos Commission was funded, the Commission has made some very significant accomplishments.

All public schools built between 1946 and 1973 have been surveyed for spray-on asbestos uses. Many hazardous conditions in these schools have been identified. The Asbestos Commission has made recommendations to alleviate the asbestos hazard. Some of these recommendations have been carried out. Other schools have not yet acted.

The Asbestos Commission is presently conducting asbestos surveys of public buildings in the state. The Commission has identified many asbestos-containing spray-on ceilings in these buildings. In addition, the presence of friable asbestos pipe and boiler insulation has been confirmed in nearly 100% of these public buildings. No official recommendations have yet been made in these cases.

Further survey work and recommendations will be made provided project funding is available.

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